

# CLASSIC DRIVER



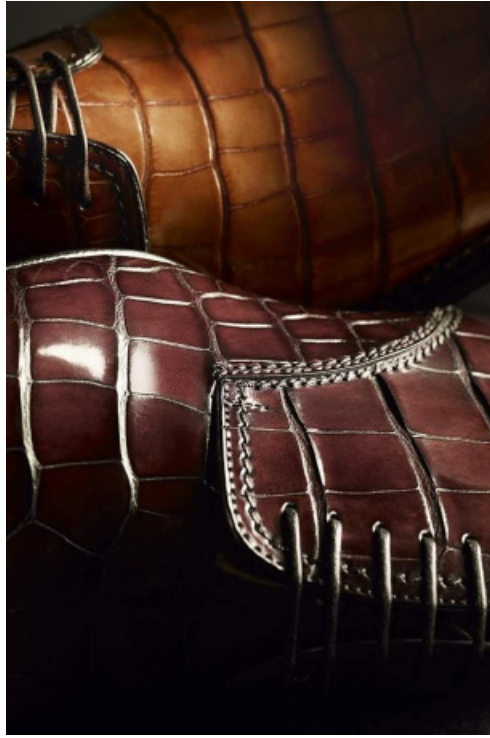
## The Louis Vuitton Footwear Atelier

11 May 2012 | Simon de Burton

*One can't help but think that architect Jean-Marc Sandrolini, who penned Louis Vuitton's footwear atelier at Fiesso d'Artico outside Venice, was having a bit of a joke when he claimed to have designed it in the likeness of a shoe box – in other words, it's concrete, rectangular and low.*

The somewhat imaginative description of the place does not, however, detract from the excellence of what happens inside. LV chose Fiesso as the base of its footwear operation in 1998 because it is the traditional home of the country's best shoemakers, more than 350 of whom are now employed in the atelier which was opened in 2009.

Inside, it's divided into four distinct areas – respectively named Alma, Speedy, Nomade and Taiga – with each one being dedicated to specific types of shoe ranging from moccasins and sneakers to more formal models for men and women.



As you might expect, the level of craftsmanship is impressive, especially in the Taiga workshop which is dedicated to the production of classic, leather-soled men's shoes which cost around 850 euros per pair for the best, Goodyear-welted designs.

From this autumn, however, UK customers will have the opportunity to take a 'step-up' in their footwear choice with the introduction of the men's Made to Order service, which offers a mind-boggling 3,000 potential combinations of model, sole, leather and colours. All 'MtO' shoes are assembled by a small team of dedicated cobblers who carry out every operation from start to finish, including the hand-varnishing and buffing of soles and the application of a unique patina to pairs made from alligator or calfskin.

To promote the service, LV has employed film-maker Luchino Visconti (a relative of the late 'Death in Venice' director of the same name) as its 'shoe ambassador' and, when Classic Driver met him, he was wearing a fabulous pair of brogues in highly appropriate British Racing Green leather (complete with matching belt).



Such pedestrian luxury will set you back 2,000 euros, although MtO prices start at around 1,500 euros – but can quickly escalate in the case of very specialised creations.

Those on a tighter budget, however, should look out for LV chief designer Kim Jones's new 'fall-winter' collection out in June. We're rather keen on the 'Storm Boot', which is apparently his new take on the traditional 'Welly'. Although, at 680 euros per pair, you might not want to get them wet... .

Photos: Louis Vuitton

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